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Black Belt Commission

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The Importance of a Shared Commitment in Disaster Relief and Recovery

By **Congresswoman Terri A. Sewell**

The 7th Congressional District of Alabama suffered massive devastation during the April tornadoes— with nine out of the twelve counties in my district experiencing tremendous damage. In my district alone, 67 lives were lost, and in the State of Alabama, 230 lives were lost. It was one of the deadliest outbreaks of tornadoes in nearly 40 years.

I want to extend my deepest condolences to those who have lost their loved ones and property. I want to thank all of the first responders who were on the scene to help so many of the victims and all the volunteers who continue to work tirelessly to restore the lives of families most affected. The destruction and loss of life has been absolutely heartbreaking. But out of this tragedy we will triumph!

The recent tragedies experienced by my district and communities across the country underscore just how important it is for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to have the resources it needs to respond to these types of disasters. FEMA, Congress, the Administration, and the American people must share a commitment to ensure that when disaster strikes, impacted communities have the necessary resources to recover, recoup and rebuild. This type of preparation requires smart investments in our observational and warning systems so that individuals have an adequate amount of time to take shelter and weather the storm. There must also be coordination with our local emergency management agencies to ensure that they have a viable disaster preparedness and response plan. These types of investments will not only provide necessary and timely warnings of dangerous weather conditions, but most importantly will save valuable lives.

The natural disasters that have occurred across the US this spring have stretched FEMA's resources towards the brink of depletion. Based on the latest estimates from FEMA, the Disaster Relief Fund is expected to be exhausted by June. Congress is working to ensure that FEMA will be able to continue to assist our communities in the aftermath of a disaster. Last year, FEMA was forced to stop making payments for over five months to states across the nation for recovery efforts from past disasters. Impacted communities desperately rely on these emergency funds and we must do all that we can to prevent this from happening again. In addition to the \$1.56 billion necessary to continue disaster recovery this year, FEMA estimates that \$6 billion will be required during the years 2012-2014 to pay for the recovery costs of past catastrophic disasters.

These tragic events have taught us all a valuable lesson about the importance of a shared commitment to disaster relief and recovery. When disaster strikes, we must respond quickly and be able to coordinate relief efforts on multiple levels including federal, state, and local agencies and organizations. When a community hurts, it is incumbent upon all of us to provide comfort, encouragement, and the resources needed to begin the long process of recovery. This is no small task, but together we are able to meet the challenge.

Federation of Southern Cooperatives Develops Tornado Disaster Relief and Recovery Strategy

Taken from Report written May 16, 2011
by John A. Zippert, Chair Agriculture Committee

April 15 and April 27, 2011, vastly changed the lives as well as the landscape for scores of Alabamians as a large portion of the state took direct hits from numerous tornadoes. Immediately after, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives set into place its Rural Training and Research Center near Epes, Alabama as a staging area for relief and recovery efforts. The focus of their work was small, isolated, rural areas in Alabama Black Belt counties surrounding Tuscaloosa to the south and west impacted by the storms.

Early in the process it became clear there were areas in the Black Belt that are not only rural, but seriously economically depressed and in danger of being left out of the process of assistance. Because of the economic situation in most of these rural communities, individuals would not be able to get out of the community to pick up relief supplies due to loss of vehicle from the storms or not having a vehicle at all.

The Federation used its Center to secure relief supplies from across the country for distribution to persons in need in rural Black Belt locations. Among the communities served were: Geiger, Emelle, Gainesville and Epes in Sumter; Tishabee, Forkland and Snoddy in Greene; Vienna and Flatwoods in Pickens; Sawyerville in Hale; Faunsdale in Marengo; and Lisman in Choctaw.

The strategy of the Federation was to find people in these communities who would be able to assist in delivering supplies to these areas. With the help of three volunteers from Louisiana a contact list of individuals in hard hit very rural communities was compiled. When relief began to flow, the Federation's job was to get them out the door as fast as they came in. At this point volunteers were identified. Volunteers came from Gainesville, Florida, Turkey Creek, Mississippi, Navarre, Florida, Marrero, Louisiana, Grand Bay, Birmingham, Eutaw, Livingston, Coden and Marion, Alabama. Over \$100,000 of donated food, water, toiletries, clothes, cleaning kits, diapers, tarps, building supplies, furniture and other items have been distributed in the two months since the storms.

The strategy of the Federation worked, as individuals in small rural hamlets did not realize they could get any kind of assistance; they did not know who FEMA was and had not seen or heard of the Red Cross. To date, with the assistance of volunteers the Federation has gotten relief supplies to over 550 individual families within these rural communities and counties and has developed a strategy that can be used in the future if needed.

The Federation has held workshops on home repair and replacement including programs of FEMA, SBA and USDA Rural Development in Geiger and Tishabee. They plan to hold workshops in all of the rural communities served to develop a long range recovery strategy. Persons interested in giving assistance or securing more information may visit the Federation's website at www.federation.coop or call John Zippert or Debra Eatman in Epes at 205/652-9676.

TORNADOS RAVAGE WEST ALABAMA – A WITNESS' PERSPECTIVE

The April 27 tornado that hit Tuscaloosa brought national attention to West Alabama. Many experienced disaster recovery officials who surveyed the area said it was some of the worst storm damage they'd ever seen. The storm activity from April 25 through 28 has been called the "2011 Super Outbreak" because 327 tornadoes hit 21 states in that short time span, with the worst occurring in Tuscaloosa on the 27th. Tuscaloosa's wedge tornado was nearly a mile wide and touched down for eight miles, destroying much of the city. Recent reports say that forty-five people in Tuscaloosa were killed.

President Obama visited the city two days after the storm to survey the damage and met with Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox, Senator Richard Shelby, and Congresswoman Terri Sewell, among other leaders. Currently, FEMA and many volunteer organizations worked to clear debris and provide food and shelter to residents affected by the storm.

Ginger Rue, Project Manager for the BBC's Communications, Education, Families, and Small Business Development Committees, lives in the Tuscaloosa area and reports that the city is pulling together to rebuild. "My church, Central Church of Christ, on Hargrove Road, was destroyed in the storm," she says. "But six of our campus ministry students took refuge in the building when the storm hit, and all six walked out without a scratch, so we feel blessed. We miss the building, of course, but it's just that—a building. We can replace it. We could never have replaced those six kids." Rue says that their congregation is currently meeting at Shelton State Fire College. "They offered us their facilities for the foreseeable future until we can rebuild. It meant a lot to all of us."

Anyone wishing to assist with disaster recovery in Tuscaloosa can call 205-248-5045.

Photos by Patrick Jacks





Plays Major Eye Care Role in Alabama's Tornado Relief

*Staff contacts thousands of storm survivors in hardest hit areas;
Assists Alabama Vision Alliance (AVA) with traveling eye clinics*

Sight Savers America (SSA) is collaborating with other vision care organizations to provide emergency eye care to as many people as possible in the areas most affected by the April 27 tornadoes. Working with AVA, Sight Savers scheduled locations for traveling vision vans in Tuscaloosa, Concord, Cordova, Pleasant Grove, Pratt City, Cullman, Moulton, Phil Campbell and Hackleburg. SSA also referred hundreds of adults and children to these clinics by using a tornado hotline and our existing database to identify individuals affected by the storms. Each person was informed of the wonderful service being offered –free eye exams, glasses, and replacement lenses all made on site.

The Sight Savers' database allowed us to specifically target and identify storm victims in a very unique way. SSA staff superimposed the FEMA identified storm tracks on google maps, zoomed in on labeled streets within the tracks and matched children's addresses in our database to a list of these streets. The Sight Savers staff began placing calls directly to these families with a mission to reach every family with an address in the storm stricken areas and determine their eye care needs. Sight Savers staff placed over 1,000 calls to these storm victims, with 245 people referred to the Vision Vans.

"This very targeted approach was only possible because Sight Savers has a database of 250,000 Alabama children with vision issues who have been served over the previous 14 years. It only made sense that we used our extensive database to contact people who survived the storms. The uniqueness of the SSA database which contains the children's addresses and other contact information, allowed SSA to sort and identify the storm victims," said Jeff Haddox Sight Savers America President & CEO. "By putting these people in touch with the VSP van and UAB/community volunteer doctors who provided eye exams, we ensured that help reached the people who needed it most.

Sight Savers Emergency Vision Hotline, which was originally updated daily with the van's latest locations and times, now continues to receive calls from anyone who was affected by the storms. They will receive a response within 24 hours.

Although Sight Savers America is a pediatric eye care organization and ordinarily works only with children, Haddox said because of the storm's widespread devastation which left so many in need, help will be extended to adults with their storm related vision needs during the recovery period.

Sight Savers worked directly with B.B. Jefferson, who coordinated efforts of AVA, a volunteer group of agencies which came together to provide emergency vision assistance during the storm recovery period. According to Jefferson, "I honestly don't think we could have accomplished this program without Sight Savers. Whatever we've needed whenever we needed it, they were there. They are the ones who jumped in to help from the very beginning and are still going strong."

Metals USA to build \$10 million, 30-job plant in Thomasville after signing deal with Lakeside

*By Jeff Amy, Press-Register
Tuesday, June 14, 2011, 10:01 PM*

Metals USA will invest \$10 million to build a 30-job steel service center in Thomasville, after signing a deal to cut metal for pipemaker Lakeside Steel.

Officials plan a ceremony at the Thomasville Civic Center at 4 p.m. today.

Lakeside Steel and Metals USA said Tuesday that they had signed a four-year contract for Metals USA to slit and warehouse steel for Lakeside's Thomasville unit.

Lakeside, a Canadian firm, is spending \$57.5 million on plants to make and process steel pipe in the Clarke County town. It plans to start its pipe mill on the south end of town in December, with its pipe finishing plant north of town to open next spring.

Metals USA will locate next to the Joe Davis Industrial Boulevard site of Lakeside's pipe mill.

Metals USA Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Lourenco Goncalves said Lakeside is an "anchor customer," but said the Fort Lauderdale, Fla., firm will seek work beyond Lakeside.

Steel service centers normally buy the metal in large quantities, cut and process the material, and sell it in smaller batches to end users. For Lakeside, Metals USA will slit coils of steel into narrower widths, but Lakeside will own the steel, Goncalves said.

Lakeside's statement said that having the Metals USA facility next door would cut the money that Lakeside has to tie up in steel, curb transportation costs, and make sure inventory flows smoothly.

"As far as other customers, we will work as we normally do, buying the steel and selling it to others," he said.

Goncalves said most of the steel would come from ThyssenKrupp AG's \$5 billion complex in Calvert. Since ThyssenKrupp opened, at least four firms have announced or opened locations in southwest Alabama, pledging more than 300 jobs.

The state Finance Department approved Thomasville's application to give Metals USA \$10 million in tax exempt Gulf Opportunity Zone bonds. GO Zone bonds, created by Congress after 2005's hurricanes, allow companies to borrow money at lower interest rates. Companies must borrow on their own credit.

Thomasville Mayor Sheldon Day said that the city and the Clarke County Commission would also pay for a rail spur and some site work. He said the total city-county commitment would be up to \$500,000, with the rail spur costing up to \$300,000 and the site preparation around \$150,000. Day said the Clarke County Commission expects to be reimbursed for site work by the state.

Metals USA would also be eligible for breaks on noneducational property taxes, sales taxes on materials and equipment and corporate income taxes.



Mayor Sheldon Day welcomes Metals USA to Thomasville and Clarke county.

Councilmember Thomas Moore Elected President of the Alabama League of Municipalities

On June 27, 2011, Councilmember Thomas Moore of Demopolis was elected by his municipal colleagues to serve as President of the Alabama League of Municipalities for 2011-2012. He was elected and took office during the League's annual convention, which was held in Huntsville June 25-28, 2011.

Newly appointed League Executive Director Ken Smith looks forward to working with Councilmember Moore over the next year. "Thomas has served on the League's Executive Committee and has been actively involved with the League for many years," Smith said. "As League Vice President, he attended numerous League meetings and training sessions as well as workshops hosted by the National League of Cities. He has a great deal of municipal knowledge and his leadership skills will serve us well as League President." Councilmember Moore also serves on the Board of Directors for the Municipal Workers Compensation Fund, Inc. (MWCF), a program developed by the League to provide workers compensation insurance, loss control and risk management services to Alabama's municipalities and municipal entities such as utility boards and industrial development boards.

In addition to his committee involvement, Councilmember Moore has attended many League workshops and training sessions and has completed the League's Basic and Advanced Certified Municipal Official (CMO) programs. Both the Basic and Advanced programs, which were begun in 1994, require 40 hours each of training through a series of one-day continuing education programs designed especially for mayors and councilmembers who voluntarily wish to receive formal training in municipal government.

The Alabama League of Municipalities was organized in 1935 and has served since that time as the recognized voice of the cities and towns in Alabama. Through the years, the organization has steadily grown and now serves more than 440 municipalities.



READING CONFERENCE

ANOTHER SUCCESS FOR BBC EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Everyone knows reading is necessary for success not only in K-12 schools but in adult life as well, and research shows that the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement is an inspiring and informed teacher. To that end, the Education Committee of the Black Belt Commission in accordance with Lowndes County Schools held the TIF Reading Conference on June 27 and 28, 2011, at the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and Spa Conference Center. "We had such a successful dropout prevention conference last February that we wanted to follow it up with another opportunity for Black Belt educators to get the professional development they need," said Dr. Daniel Boyd, chairman of the BBC Education Committee and Superintendent of Lowndes County Schools. Dr. Boyd felt that the conference was important because studies indicate that students are reading and comprehending below expected levels.

Approximately 120 participants from Lowndes, Butler, Greene, Macon, Perry, and Bullock Counties, along with Selma City Schools, chose to attend the event, which was free of charge. The conference gave teachers and administrators information on the newest research about how children learn, emerging technological tools for the classroom, new curriculum resources, classroom management skills, and other topics related to improving reading skills. The overall goal was to create an effective school culture focused on reading and to have all students reading on grade level by the year 2014.

Sessions included "Culture and Reading" (Tommy Langley, SREB), "Classroom Management" and "Motivating Teachers" (Starr Plump, ASU), "Bullying" (Cecelia Mills, State Department of Education), "Standards-Based Instruction" (Robin Gower, ITS), "Building Academic Success through Vocabulary" and "Development and Instructional Leadership for Building-Based Learners" (Deborah Childs-Bowen, Samford University), and "Technology Education" (Wendolyn LaFleur, Technology in Motion). Dr. Childs-Bowen's luncheon address was entitled, "A Formula for Effective Schools."

"I received a lot of new information I can use since I'll be changing from elementary to high school this fall," said Lisa Riley of Lowndes County Schools, who has been a reading coach for five of her eight years of teaching. "For the first time, they're placing reading intervention teachers in both middle and high schools." Shirley McCurdy, a second-grade teacher with Lowndes County Schools, said, "This workshop has been most beneficial to me because I've been working at a non-grant school, so I've not been able to take continuing education classes and professional development courses. This was free. All I had to do was attend."



***Yvette Patterson and
Dr. Daniel Boyd,
Lowndes County Board
of Education.
Dr. Boyd, Chair of the
Education Committee of
the Black Belt
Commission.***

BLACK BELT COMMISSION'S EDUCATION COMMITTEE ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO PURSUE ENGINEERING

Studying engineering isn't for everyone. Of those college students who are ambitious enough to declare engineering as a major, only about 37% actually finish with an engineering degree. Engineering students typically require a fifth year of college in order to complete the rigorous coursework. Yet for those who prevail, the job market tends to be kind: according to the U.S. Department of Labor, people who hold bachelor's degrees in engineering earn some of the highest average starting salaries.

The Education Committee of Alabama's Black Belt Commission decided a few years ago that exposing rural students to opportunities in engineering would become a focus of the committee work. To that end, the Education Committee began working with Alabama Power Company and later NUCOR Steel to offer scholarships for Black Belt high school students to attend the University of Alabama's Student Introduction to Engineering, a week-long summer program that prepares rising juniors and seniors for a college major in engineering fields. Students in the program study engineering design, trigonometry and calculus, computer technology, and technical writing. They also have the opportunity to tour engineering facilities and meet professional engineers and ask questions. All students work in teams to complete an engineering design challenge, and a competition is held at the week's end.

Marcus McCall of Letohatchee, Alabama, received a scholarship from Alabama Power through the Black Belt Commission in 2010. Now a junior at Calhoun High School, Marcus is currently taking the most challenging classes his school has to offer. "He's a very solid student," says his guidance counselor, Curtis Jackson. "Marcus is now planning to enter the military to pay for his college education." Marcus says that without the generosity of Alabama Power, he would not have been able to afford to attend the SITE program. "I hadn't been exposed to trigonometry before SITE, and I'd tried to teach it to myself," he says. "The SITE program helped me get a basic understanding of the harder math I'd need to take in high school and college, and I wasn't afraid to sign up for those courses afterward."

Angelica Gibson of Silas, Alabama, was a rising senior at South Choctaw High School when Alabama Power helped her afford the SITE program. "She wouldn't have been able to go to SITE without Alabama Power and the Black Belt Commission," says Angelica's mom. "It was wonderful for her. She fell in love with UA and the professors and students she met there. The SITE program helped prepare her for engineering courses, and now she's studying chemical engineering at Alabama and doing very well."

Bernisha Goldsmith of Central High School in Lowndes County was similarly inspired by the SITE program upon receiving a scholarship sponsored by NUCOR Steel last summer. After spending a week in July at SITE, Bernisha came back to Central with a greater sense of motivation, says her math teacher Gwendolyn Cosby. "After SITE, Bernisha knew what she wanted out of life," Cosby says. "And I could tell a big difference in her math skills. She had been exposed to higher level math

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

and was well prepared.” Bernisha is currently planning to major in engineering at either or Alabama State, Cosby says.

Program director Gregory Singleton says that SITE is designed as much to encourage engineering as a major as it is to discourage it. “Certainly we hope that the students who come through the SITE program will be inspired to major in engineering at UA,” he says. “But we also realize there’s value in helping students realize early on if engineering’s not for them. Better to learn that now than after paying a couple of years of college tuition.”

The Black Belt Commission hopes that continuing the SITE scholarships will help Black Belt students have a better shot at the possibilities open to them in engineering fields, says Education Committee chairman Dr. Daniel Boyd. “This program exposes students to the kind of life they can have if they work hard in college, and it encourages them to go ahead and start taking those hard classes now, while they’re still in high school, so they’ll be ready for the tough college courses. We are so appreciative of the University of Alabama, and of Alabama Power Company and NUCOR Steel, for their commitment to Black Belt youth.”



Sight Savers America Awarded \$100,000 Verizon Foundation Grant for KidCheck

***Grant to Utilize Wireless Technology to Improve
Health Screenings and Follow-Up Treatments for Alabama
K-12 School Children***

MONTGOMERY – The Sight Savers America, an Alabama-based nonprofit, received a \$100,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation to expand the use of wireless technology for our award-winning KidCheck Program. Executives from the Verizon Foundation presented the check to the Sight Savers America KidCheck Program this morning at a news conference with Governor Robert Bentley, House Speaker Mike Hubbard, and Dr. Joe Morton, Alabama State School Superintendent.

Jeff Haddox, CEO of Sight Savers, said “This grant will be used to expand the wireless tracking method to at least ten school systems and to link the KidCheck health screening database in real time with the Sight Savers database.”, *(Continued on page 10)*

(Continued from page 9)

Jeff Mango, president – Georgia/Alabama Region of Verizon Wireless, said the grant has the potential to impact the lives of over 16,000 Alabama students, particularly in rural areas of Alabama.” “We see the exciting potential of technology to help address disparities in the access to quality healthcare in rural areas,” Mango said. “Verizon is proud to be able to help Sight Savers build on the initial success of KidCheck. Supporting programs that use technology to improve healthcare access is among Verizon’s top priorities.”

“In the past, KidCheck used a manual screening process leaving school nurses with the daunting task of going through a stack of paperwork, reaching out to parents and sending follow-up paperwork to Sight Savers and various healthcare providers,” Haddox said. “This often took months which slowed down the coordination of necessary follow-up care for the children.”

The Verizon Foundation grant will fund the hardware and software needed to make the KidCheck screening process completely paperless. It will utilize swipe card technology using laptops, netbook computers, and scanners. This grant will fund a central information repository so that data can be kept electronically. Additionally, the grant will fund the training of this new technology for participating college nursing school faculty and students who administer the KidCheck screenings.

To date, KidCheck has been implemented in 43 Alabama school systems in conjunction with over 20 Alabama two and four year college nursing schools. During KidCheck, a school gym is set up with 8-10 screening stations including height and weight, BMI, temperature, blood pressure, heart and respiratory rates, vision and dental screenings, along with eye, ears, nose, and throat exams. Sight Savers provides case managed follow-up care for children failing a KidCheck vision screening.

“Sight Savers intends to use this grant to take KidCheck to a whole new level and to build an unmatched healthcare network for children in need that will set the bar for other states,” Haddox said. “Verizon is making it possible for Alabama to lead the nation in preventative health screenings in our schools.” “Sight Savers has a proven track record of case managing vision follow-up and our ultimate goal for our KidCheck Program is to bring case managed follow-up to other important follow-up components and this grant is an important step in that direction.”

KidCheck became a department of Sight Savers America in February and the program continues strategic partnerships with Governor Robert Bentley’s Administration and various state agencies including ALSDE, ADPH, ALL Kids, Medicaid, and the Alabama Rural Development Office.



KIDCHECK

health screening to expand with *Auburn students' wireless system*

Tuesday, June 14, 2011, 10:30 AM

Hannah Wolfson — The Birmingham News

Students from Auburn University's engineering school have designed a wireless system that should allow Alabama's KidCheck health screening program to expand.

The system allows student nurses to check children's vision, blood pressure, heart rate, blood sugar, teeth and other health measures and enter the data into netbook computers as they go. Before, the program, which provides health testing for rural and underserved communities, depended on time-consuming paperwork that left school nurses with the task of communicating with parents and sending follow-up forms to doctors.

"This is going to cut out the paper trail. It's going to allow the school nurses to access data immediately and it will automatically print reports to go home to parents as opposed to a manual process," said Chad Nichols, director of KidCheck for Sight Savers, which oversees the program. KidCheck started in 2008 as a state-run initiative but is now under Sight Savers' umbrella.

Switching to the nonprofit world let the program become eligible for a \$100,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation, some of which is going to help implement the new electronic system. Auburn also got a \$23,000 grant to develop the network and an \$18,000 follow-up grant that's allowing the team to expand it.

Five Auburn engineering students, led by computer science professor Richard Chapman, created a network that uses laptops, smaller netbooks and swipe cards to enter health information into a central databank. As each child enters the screening area — usually held in a school gym for 200 to 400 students at a time — he or she is given a bar-coded card on a lanyard. At every station, the nurse swipes the card to add more data. The information is all combined in the child's digital file and also goes into a central database so KidCheck and others can look for trends or compare from year to year.

It should also encourage more school systems to sign on, said Nichols. About 45 school systems around the state use the KidCheck program, although only 30 of those do it every year. For those who don't, Nichols said, the load on staff may be an impediment.

Chapman said a new team of students is now working on making the system even more streamlined by allowing the medical equipment to automatically enter the data and flag problems. That would both speed up the process and prevent errors, he said. It's also providing good hands-on experience for the Auburn students, who have had to attend KidCheck screenings to work on their design.

"One really good aspect of this is that they see their work being put to use in the real world to do some good," he said.

WCCS Opens New 3-D Advanced Visualization Center

SELMA — Wallace Community College Selma celebrated the Open House of the Advanced Visualization Center on Wednesday, June 8, 2011 at 10 a.m.

After a brief presentation, attendees explored learning in virtual reality through the college's new Advanced Visualization Center.

The WCCS Advanced Visualization Center is a state-of-the-art learning facility designed to provide innovative and engaging curricula and training for industry, government, educators, entrepreneurs, and law enforcement. The facility includes virtual and simulated environments, 3-D and 4-D object development labs, 3-D immersive experiences, and telepresence conference areas. Center staff will create and produce interactive, simulated and immersive learning programs to develop and enhance education and training.

"This is an exciting event for our college," said WCCS President James Mitchell. "This cutting edge initiative creates an opportunity to bring together education, business and economic development as well as promotes the college's role in fostering innovation and economic development in Dallas County and surrounding communities."

For more information about the AVC or to schedule a tour, contact Tammy Helms at 334-876-9412 or tammy.helms@wccs.edu.

(Dr. James Mitchell is Chair of the Skills Training and Workforce Development Committee)



Open house guests view 3D images in the Experience and Discovery Lab.



AVC Developer Mark Halpin conducts a tour of the Broadcast Studio Lab



Shuntelra Logan, AVC Business/Industry Specialist gives Selma Mayor George Evans a tour of the Development Lab.

HALE COUNTY HOSPITAL GOES *ELECTRONIC*

Submitted by West Alabama Regional Commission

Hale County Hospital has purchased the necessary equipment, software and training to implement a hospital-wide electronic records and patient care system that will include networking with the hospital's physicians and surrounding acute care facilities.

The system provides an electronic format for patient records and care plans in a secure and networked environment that is HIPAA compliant.

The hospital in Hale County is one of many to switch from a paper system to an electronic system to meet a federal mandate requiring health facilities to have health care records in an electronic format and networked so that they can be readily and securely stored and transferred electronically.

West Alabama Regional Commission staff assisted hospital personnel with securing a \$218,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission to fund 80% of the project.



Lindsey Sims is pictured viewing data on her new computer.



Scarlett Kyser works on new equipment at Hale County Hospital.

A NEW LOOK AT HISTORY

Submitted by West Alabama Regional Commission

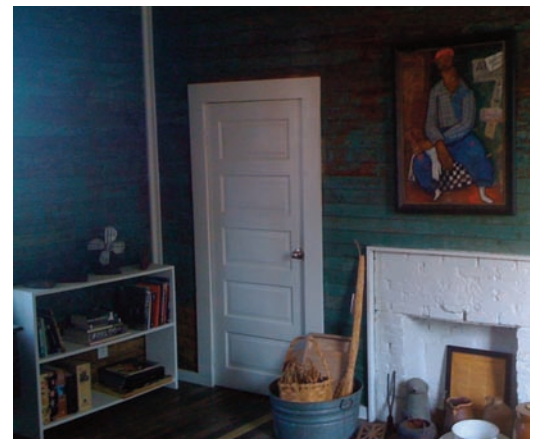
The Safe House Black History Museum in Greensboro is being renovated to depict how it looked in the early 20th century. Period artifacts are displayed throughout the museum. The renovation project is taking place while an Appalachian Regional Commission-funded education enhancement project is underway. ARC funded computers, software and other items to expand the educational opportunities at the museum. West Alabama Regional Commission staff assisted the Safe House with obtaining the ARC grant.



Melissa Averette is shown at her new work station.



Auburn Rural Studio students (L-R) Chris Curry, Cassandra Kellogg, and Candace Rimes are shown at the announcement of plans to renovate the Safe House Black History Museum in Greensboro. Visitors shown are from as far away as Pennsylvania.



Dr. Lynn Boyd Resigns as Chair of Black Belt Families Committee

Dr. Lynn Boyd, who served as chair of the Families Committee for the past three years submitted her letter of resignation dated June 8, 2011. We appreciate her dedication and the contribution she made to this committee and to the Black Belt Commission. She will be missed!

Hank Sanders *Dee Dee* *Shirley* *Margaret Bentley*



Dr. Lynn Boyd

PERRY COUNTY CHILDREN RECEIVE FREE EYE CARE 5TH CLINIC HELD

MARION – The Black Belt Eye Care Consortium (BBECC) with coordination by Sight Savers America provided free, comprehensive eye care to pre-screened children in the Alabama Black Belt. 80 children were seen by appointment only from 9:00am to 4:00pm at the Perry County Public Health Department in Marion on April 12th.



Young girl is examined by doctor at Perry County Eye Clinic.



LensCrafters employees provide free frames for those children who need glasses. An optomologist and his assistant fit a child with the proper frame.



Ron Sparks is pictured with Frances Ford, Perry County Health Clinic and Sowing Seeds of Hope, Jeff Haddox with Black Belt Eye Care Consortium, Chad Nichols, Sight Savers of America and Dr. Ashvin Parikh of the Perry County Health Clinic.



Ron Sparks, Director of Alabama Rural Development Office, looks on as a young girl picks out frames.

PERRY COUNTY DIALYSIS CENTER UPDATE

*By Frances Ford
Sowing Seeds of Hope*

The residents of Perry County continue to travel to the surrounding counties for dialysis. The treatment regimen requires them to travel three times a week to Selma, Demopolis, and Eutaw. They will be on the dialysis machines for three to five hours each visit. When there is a problem with their access site it requires them to travel to Montgomery or Birmingham to have corrective procedures. There are days when patients travel from Marion to Selma to Birmingham to Selma and return home to Marion.

This gives you an idea of the hardships these patients and their families endure. There is a thirty-three year old African American male that is legally blind and wheelchair bound with numerous co morbidities along with his end stage renal disease. He has to travel to Selma three times a week.

We hope help is on the way for the patients with end stage renal disease which requires dialysis. Davita Dialysis Company has been in Perry County several times recently to visit and evaluate potential sites for a dialysis center. In May, Mr. Brandon King met with Chairman Fairest Cureton of Perry County Commission, Mr. Ross Gunnels, Office of Rural Development, Mr. Ashvin Parikh, Perry County Public Health Department and me to discuss opportunities in Perry County. Mr. Joseph Marchant, Bibb Medical Center, met with us and showed us a building that would be a good site for the center in Marion.

In July, Mr. Brandon King met with County Commissioner Cureton to discuss how the Perry County Commission may be able to assist with the project. We look forward to hearing from Mr. King after he makes his presentation to Davita.

There are some appropriation funds from HRSA awarded to Sowing Seeds of Hope with which we provide dialysis patients with fuel vouchers to assist with transportation to dialysis. The patients are appreciative of the small effort to provide some relief to them and their families. Congresswoman Terri Sewell was also supportive in this effort.

Even though obstacles have been thrown in our path, we are resolved to continue to work for the dialysis patients who are excited about the possibility of having a center in Perry County.

Accelerating Entrepreneurship in the Delta

Coming soon to a city near you!

July 6-7	Poplar Bluff, Mo.
July 20-22	Grenada, Miss.
Aug. 9-11	Harrisburg, Ill.
Aug. 16-18	Jackson, Tenn.
Aug. 23-25	Little Rock, Ark.
Aug. 30-Sept. 1	Gilbertsville, Ky.
Sept. 7-9	Eufaula, Ala.
Sept. 14-16	Rayville, La.

Who should attend:
Business and community leaders who are interested in accelerating small business start-ups by utilizing this nationally recognized program for microenterprise development.

Topics:

- Developing an Entrepreneurial Climate in Your Community
- Role of Incubators, Industrial Parks and other Support Systems
- Inspiring a New Generation of Entrepreneurs
- Best Practices in Entrepreneurship Development in the Delta
- And much more...

Certification Training:

- Become a certified Operation JumpStart Program Administrator
- Become a certified Operation JumpStart: First Step Training Facilitator
- A limited number of scholarships are available to participants, so register early! Certification Training is a \$500 value.

OPERATION JUMPSTART

To register, go to
www.operationjumpstart.biz or
call (573) 651-5156.

Logos:
U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)
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